

Lip Mach 2000

I have for a long time been interested in the history of the Lip watch company, and I have recently accumulated sufficient material to write a reasonably comprehensive article about the firm and its products. However, such an article would be somewhat unwieldy, so I needed to find a way in to the subject such that members would be interested but not bogged down, and as I am a fan of Lip, this would have been a bit self-defeating. I therefore decided to choose a particularly important Lip model, and view the company through that Lip icon, and the watch I have chosen is the Mach 2000 Chronograph. Interestingly, having chosen to feature that watch, designed back in the early 1970s, I suddenly saw someone wearing said watch on television and I must admit, it looked pretty good. Ironically, given that Lip is essentially a French watch company, the guy wearing it was a contributor in a programme about the French electronic music duo, Daft Punk.

The history of the Lip watch company is fascinating and, paradoxically perhaps, it is full of both innovation and industrial turmoil. In terms of innovation, Lip was a pioneer in the development of electric and quartz watch technology as well as being the first company to successfully produce genuine tourbillon movements of sufficiently small size to be used in wrist watches. The firm was also pioneering in terms of watch design - and here enters the Mach 2000, produced at a time when the Lip company was on the verge of financial meltdown, having only just survived a period of severe industrial unrest that had led to a virtual takeover by the Swiss consortium Ebauches S.A. (who became the largest stock holder in 1970), the firing of 1,300 workers and, in 1971, the forced resignation of Fred Lipmann, who had been the force behind the company for many years. After the resignation of Fred Lipmann, the Lip company was no longer in family hands, and the original company itself now had only a few years to run before eventual liquidation. And yet, in those years up to 1976, Lip managed to manufacture the first French quartz watches (from 1973) as well as the Mach 2000 range, including the chronograph, one of the most recognised and celebrated Lip watches.

As a way out of the financial and industrial problems besieging the Lip concern, a two-pronged attack began in 1973. One prong was concerned with the labour situation and resulted in a workers' takeover of the factory, while the other prong, ultimately more forthcoming, was the introduction of new designs. Thus it was that the Lip company commissioned the French industrial designer Roger Tallon (1929-2011) to produce a new watch range - of a truly novel design. And thus an adventurous range of watches came out of adversity and crisis. Tallon himself was an important designer who had worked on many projects where modernisation was required in various products and systems. He designed airline interiors for Air France, robots for Peugeot, and most significantly, the high-speed TGV trains. Launched in 1973, the Roger Tallon watch designs comprised a remarkable range of watches for Lip, using plastic as an important constituent material, in both the case and strap, for the first time and skilfully combining playfulness with serious purpose in the watches. The watch design was asymmetrical - another innovation that was later to influence other watch designs, including the 1980s Seiko Speedmaster range, designed by Giugiaro.

The Mach 2000 range of watches as a whole are aesthetically interesting, although it is the Dark Master Chronograph X that has been taken as the central model for most attention. The use of three brightly coloured balls as the chronograph buttons and winding crown, and the post-modern look to the dial and hands, are distinctive and are still aesthetically relevant in today's product design. A final appraisal of this watch is best left to Nick Downes, in his important article on Lip written in 2002, where he states that, "The most striking Tallon-designed watch is the asymmetrical Valjoux 7734-based chronograph, and the version with coloured buttons has to be seen to be believed. If you like people to notice the watch you're wearing, this is the beast for you! It's 45mm side-to-side, and with the large integrated black plastic strap it's difficult to forget you're wearing it. They were reissued in the 1980s, and so are relatively easy to find, and are even seen NIB."

The original Roger Tallon Lip Mach 2000 Dark Master Chronograph, designed in 1973 and still aesthetically stimulating (pic from thewatchspot.co.uk):



The development of new watch designs in the 1970s from the likes of Roger Tallon and Michel Boyer was not enough to halt the decline of Lip for long, and the company essentially ceased production in 1976. Fortunately - or unfortunately, depending on your point of view - the closure in 1976 did not mark the end of the Lip brand itself, although there were no Lip-manufactured watches after that date. Well, I say that but in fact there was a second workers' occupation in May 1976, and production restarted to the joy of "Liberation" newspaper (acute accent on the 'e') which announced, "Lip, c'est reparti". This time round, there was no subsequent offer to take Lip over commercially,

and the company was finally and irrevocably liquidated in September 1977. Following that final closure, the brand itself survived and was bought and sold a number of times, which means that modern watches branded Lip are commonly encountered in charity shops and collectibles markets, most of which are inexpensive and inoffensive, powered by quartz movements - often by ETA. Most of the cheap modern Lip watches I come across seem to be gold plated women's examples, but I recently acquired a not-so-bad Lip-branded stainless steel gents chronograph.

If you wish to purchase a Lip Mach 2000 chronograph or other watch in the Mach 2000 range, you can choose between three production periods. Firstly there are the originals, made by Lip in the 1970s, and these are obviously the most desirable pieces to own. The watches were a hit from the start, and although I have never seen one for sale on my watch-collecting rounds, they may have been made in some number. I think it is possible that, because Lip watches (and modern design in general) have been under-represented over here in Britain, there are not so many examples to be found in this country. The second production period, mentioned by Nick Downes, occurred when the watches were reissued in the 1980s, and the third period is current, with at least part of the Mach 2000 range being made available today. For those who are interested in acquiring a Lip Mach 2000 chronograph today, the Aeronef Chronograph - identical to the version with coloured buttons but all-black - is available for \$469.99 from Watchismo. Other Tallon-designed Lip watches from the same range are also available from the Watchismo site. I should just say that the current reissued black chronograph is quartz and powered by a Swiss ETA 251.271 movement. It has a stainless steel black case and mineral glass crystal (rather than anodised aluminium and plastic in the originals) and a black leather strap, screwed caseback and 3 atm water resistance. It is slightly smaller than the Tallon original, measuring 42mm X 40mm. There is also a replica or reissue by Lip of the Dark Master Mach 2000 chronograph, with the coloured buttons, also quartz and, like the Aeronef chrono, also with certain differences to elements of the original mechanical Mach 2000 chronograph. A reissue Mach 2000 Dark Master chrono with coloured buttons and quartz movement can be had for about £350, but for me personally, the original watch is the one to go for. The aesthetic and material differences between the new edition and the first production run may appear to be superficial, but to my mind, they are sufficient to warrant a search for a true 1970s original. And the bonus in the original is a mechanical chrono movement rather than today's ubiquitous quartz chrono movements. I have just seen an original Mach 2000 chronograph priced at \$3495, so buying a true original on demand is not going to be a cheap exercise - I shall just have to wait until a bargain turns up.

The original Mach 2000 Dark Master chronograph - rear view with movement exposed (pic from watchspot.co.uk):



I suppose that by focusing on the Mach 2000 Chronograph, I have started at the wrong end of the Lip story, where decline, industrial unrest, and final brand marketing were the order of the day. The Lip company has a long history, stemming right back to 1867 when Emmanuel Lippman set up the "Comptoir Lipmann" in Besancon (cedilla beneath the 'c'), the heart of French watchmaking. As early as 1900, the renamed "Societe Anonyme d'Horlogerie Lipmann Freres" was producing its first in-house movement, and a factory was built in 1907. In 1908, the brand name, Lip, was registered and in 1910 the company produced 10,000 watches. And so began the long and complex history of

Lip watches, a company whose watches should probably be more highly appreciated by collectors in this country - at least that is my own opinion.

The 2014 Lip reissue of the Dark Master Mach 2000 chronograph - with quartz movement and other specifications altered from the original masterpiece. Also, no "Made in France" designation. Looks OK but I would want an original (pic from viacomit.net):



For the ultimate Lip collector is this rare prototype Mach 2000 moonphase calendar watch that is available for about \$1500 - this model, which still retained the three-balls of the chronograph model, was apparently never put into production (pic from static.squarespace.com):



Lip Mach 2000 (Valjoux Cal. 7734)...

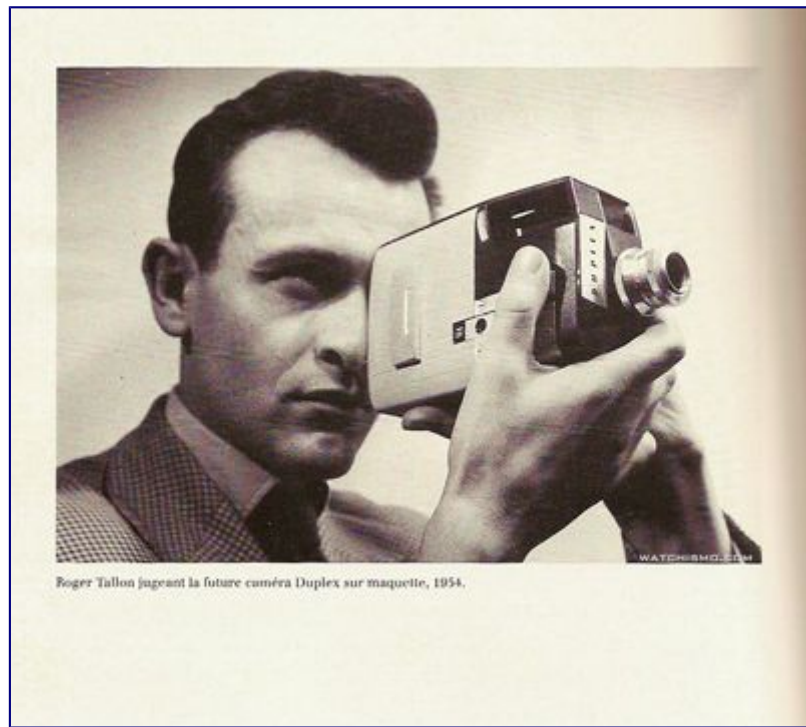
February 26, 2010 in [Chronograph](#) Tags: [Valjoux](#)

Designed in 1973, this Mach 2000 “Dark Master” chronograph became an iconic watch for the French company Lip.

(Click pictures to enlarge)



During the 1960's and 70's Lip commissioned a number of architectural, interior and graphic designers to create some of the most original wristwatches ever produced. Roger Tallon was the real stand-out from the seven designers chosen both in terms of his work for Lip and his career as a whole, during which he designed the high speed TGV train, the worlds first portable TV (the ‘Teleavia’), the 8mm camera, and the Helecoidal staircase.



Roger designed no less than 24 different models for Lip, the most famous of which is undoubtedly the Mach 2000. With its D-shaped asymmetric case and quirky multi-coloured pushers it quickly became a cult icon. The watch was originally fitted with a very popular 1970's chronograph calibre, the Valjoux cal. 7734.



In operation it is just like any other Valjoux powered chronograph; the blue ball in the centre is the crown, used for winding and time-setting. The yellow ball/pusher is used to start and stop the chronograph, and the red ball/pusher is used to reset.

Finding these original versions in good condition can be quite hard these days. These watches came to me needing little more than cosmetic tidying up, but I couldn't miss the chance to write about them on the blog, it could be a while before another one graces the bench.

In 2008 Lip reissued the Mach 2000 along with a number of other classic models from the 1970's. As well as the original version they also released a version in silver called the "Light Master" and a version black rather than multi-coloured balls called the "Aeronef". All the new models are fitted with quartz rather than mechanical movements (too bad!), but they retain almost the same styling as the original.

The owner of the watch in this post, Henrik de Keizer, is lucky enough to own two of them, the second being this one with gold rather than coloured balls.



LIP Mach 2000 Dark Master Chronograph X Watch Review: Seventies Design Era Revival Fit To be Worn

[Wrist Time Reviews](#)

4 Comments February 16, 2008 by [Ariel Adams](#)

Watch design represents a challenge for industrial designers. A watch is both an accessory and a tool. A particular combination that industrial designers are not used to working with. Further still, most watches are not designed by industrial designers. Watch design is usually reserved for watch makers, artists, or other dedicated watch professionals. Most watches are actually not designed by general industrial designers at all.

Regardless, many industrial designers cannot help but be attracted to the allure of watch design, and you will see some watches in most popular industrial designer portfolios. The reason might have to do with the fact that beyond the telling of time, there is so much flexibility allowed in designing something that functions and appears equally marvelous. A successful watch design can prove lasting fame and high consumer demand. Watch design is almost exclusively controversial by nature. Meaning that there seems to be no universally accepted watch face designs. Inherently personal, no matter how much "utility" is a focal point of design, there are always going to be those who disagree with the effectiveness of the end result. Because of this, there is risk involved when any designer attempts to make a watch. The goal should be that at least some people absolutely love the design. A classic example of this is the famous Movado Museum Watch (designed by Nathan George Horwitt). Not originally designed by Movado, but later acquired, this is the epitome of a watch dreamed up by an industrial designer. The Museum watch has its share of fans, but also enemies who argue that the over minimalism defeats the purpose for which a clock or watch exists, i.e. accurate display of the time.

Other designs perhaps fare better, and it is up to a watch maker to use discretion when deciding how to design a watch and which to release. While not the traditional Swiss bastion of watch design, France is by no means a stranger to beautiful art. Much of the most beautiful industrial design in the 20th century flowed out of France, having a distinct playful character to it. Not being ignorant of this fact, the LIP watch company made a wise decision in the 1960s and 1970s to contract out the talent of successful industrial designers to create new watches for the company. One such designer was [Roger Tallon](#), who ended up designing several highly successful watches for LIP.

Designed in 1973, the [LIP](#) Mach 2000 collection was the highlight of Roger Tallon's contribution to LIP. Post moon-landing years resulted in a golden era for futurism design. Now that humans had begun to conquer space, the possibilities seemed endless, and the shape of consumer goods needed to reflect these sentiments. The LIP Mach 2000 Dark Master Chronograph X is a flagship watch. It embodies the complete spirit of French design as well as 1970s pop futurism. Originally produced in the 1970s, the French watch maker LIP has released a "seventies revival" line of watches, that includes the Mach 2000 Dark Master Chronograph, among other watches. Thus, this is not the Original Mach 2000 Chronograph X, but a modern version which is extraordinarily similar to the original Roger Tallon masterpiece. This review will mainly discuss the modern interpretation of the design, but also compare the new with the old. Let's examine the individual components of the LIP Mach 2000 Dark Master Chronograph to determine the merits of the design, and the watch itself.

The first thing you will notice about the watch is the asymmetric positioning of the dial, and the large candy colored crown and pushers. It takes a while for this to sink in, realizing this is not something you are used to, but can come to appreciate, even prefer. The large yellow, blue, and red balls immediately contrast with the industrial looking angles and curves of the rest of the watch

which are in black anodized aluminum. The original also used a black anodized aluminum case. The result is a construction which is light with a good texture, and does not appear at all cheap. Build quality is good, and pushers are solidly in place. In fact, the pushers are one of the best features of the watch. Not only do they charm you with their colorful appearance, but they are wonderfully ergonomic. Anyone who has a qualm with having large balls on your watch will immediately dismiss such issues once they are able to operate the watch using them. Color wise, they are a bit lighter than I would like. I personally would have preferred a deeper yellow, blue, and red, but this is a personal preference. Tallon's genius really comes through when you can immediately appreciate the aesthetic and functional benefits of the ball pushers and crown the first moment you use them.



Although the watch case is a unique shape, the face of the watch is round. LIP uses a mineral glass for the crystal (the old version probably has a plastic crystal which was common at the time), and the interior of the watch is where the old and new LIP Mach 2000 differ the most. The variation has almost exclusively to do with the movements involved. The original Mach 2000 Chronograph X used a mechanical Valjoux 7734 manually wound chronograph movement, and the modern interpretation uses as quartz ETA 251.271 chronograph movement. The original Mach 2000 Chronograph X had the two internal subdial registers perfectly centered and polarized in the middle of the watch face. The look was very attractive, but the movement only allowed for a 30 minute chronograph counter. Thus, one register counted chronograph minutes, and the other was the seconds hand for the time. The large seconds hand on the watch was used for the chronograph. The situation is somewhat different in the new LIP Mach 2000 Chronograph, which uses a different movement. The ETA 251.271 is a 12 hour chronograph, as opposed to a mere 30 minute one. This means it has registers for seconds, minutes and hours, totaling three subdials. To allow the ETA 251.271 to function as the original LIP Mach 2000 Chronograph X, and appear the same, some modifications had to be made. LIP removed the third register that indicated the seconds for the time, which is usually placed at the bottom of the face. Thus on the new LIP Mach 2000, the two subdials

on the face register the chronographic minutes and hours, while the chronographic seconds are registered by the large yellow seconds hand on the face of the watch. You thus have a trade off, the new LIP Mach 2000 Chronograph X will measure 11 and a half more hours than the original, but on the new watch, there is no register for the seconds for the time. This is really a minor issue as most people don't need to measure the seconds, and if they do, they can simply use the chronograph to do so. The new watch does not have the registers placed in the same location because of the movement, which does not allow for registers to be placed so far apart without significant modification that would not make sense in a watch at this price point. LIP made a wise decision here. The quartz movement is more reliable than the mechanical Valjoux 7734, and provides more functionality over all. One small issue however is the marking of the indexes on the chronograph minute counter. The counter measures a total of 30 minutes (used twice for each hour). The markings on the counter are mis-drawn. Meaning you cannot rely on the number indexes to count how many minutes have passed with precision. You can still rely of the "10, 20, and 30" minute indicators, but in between them you have to eye it. The reason for nonconformity is that LIP wanted to ensure the new Mach 2000 looked as much like the original as possible. The effect would be lost a bit as the left counter was meant to have more indexes that the right. It is a small price to pay for the watch to look as it was intended. Overall, chronograph measuring was comfortable and legible. The face appears uncluttered, and reading the registers is clear and easy. This cannot be said about all chronograph watches. Another tip of the hat to Mr. Tallon.



Size wise the original and new LIP are somewhat different. To envelop the Valjoux 7734 movement, the original had to be a bit larger at 47x40mm. The new LIP Mach 2000 Chronograph X is more comfortably sized at 42x40mm. The case really hugs your wrist in a pleasant manner, and the pushers are easy to operate while the watch is worn. The asymmetric quality of the watch in no way impedes how easy it is to wear the watch, and at times seems to be a benefit as it simply makes sense given the orientation. Roger Tallon was able to make a serious watch that was meant to be asymmetrical, rather than just play around with the asymmetric theme.

The rubber strap is another wonderful feature of the watch, and is very well designed. The segmentation of the strap breaks up the monotonous lines that would otherwise occur, and the squared holes for the clasp run the entire length of the strap so not to break the lineation. The clasp and buckle themselves are also particularly well done. While not the first clasp to do so, it is squared and flat, rather than rounded. This allows for a tighter, more secure fit, and allows for the buckle to enter the holes in the strap much easier. The result is a strap that is easier to wear. If you

prefer, you can easily remove the strap and replace it with any number of properly sized straps available on the market. Any red, blue, or yellow strap that matches the colors of the pushers or crown would actually look quite nice on this watch.

The case back is screwed down, though this is not a divers watch. Regardless, owners should not fear washing their hands with the watch or any such light water activities. I've not worn too many other watches that seem to fit so well yet comfortably on my wrist. Some people might say this about Swatch watches, but the broad, flatter shape of the LIP Mach 2000 Chronograph stays on top of the wrist much better. When it comes down to it, the LIP is an avant garde watch that you can easily live with everyday. Novelty aside, it is a comfortable time telling watch. The squared white hands of the watch are well suited for high legibility as they contract against the black color of the face. LIP decided not to use any luminant on the hands or face. This might have caused the color scheme to skew a bit, as luminant tends to add a yellowish hue. Regardless, legibility is still good in low-light conditions.

Wearing the [LIP Mach 2000 Dark Master Chronograph](#) has earned it's fare share of compliments and questions. Interested viewers want to know what the watch is, where I got it, and why they haven't heard of it before. LIP watches have only now come to America (even though the company has existed for over 150 years), and are available in just a few places. Online, watch design expert "The Watchismo" offers a wide range of LIP watches available at www.watchismo.com. In stores, you can now find LIP watches exclusively at Barney's Department Stores at their various locations. The high-end Barney's apparently quickly jumped at the chance to distribute these modern interpretations of the classic Roger Tallon masterpiece that epitomizes an era that is making a come back.

Should you buy a LIP Mach 2000 Dark Master Chronograph? The answer to that all depends on whether you find a connection with the ideal presented in 1970s futurism. Do you want a piece of modern design history? Can you appreciate the toils of industrial design and post-Bauhaus era industrial French charm? Will the concept of psychological design resonate with you in so far that the bright colors and organic shapes combine with pure function to interface better with humans? The LIP Mach 2000 Chronograph design is one man's attempt to address these issues and more. An interesting watch on several levels, full appreciation of this watch stems from pulling back the layers with an understanding of Roger Tallon's original design. [The new revival series of the LIP watches](#) are far easier to own, and a much better value than the originals ever were. Not often is a watch "re-released," and now for the first time in America, so take a close look. The LIP Mach 2000 Dark Master Chronograph earns a permanent place in my collection.